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A

TRANSLATION

OF THE

INAUGURATION SPEECH,

OR FIRST LECTURE

ON THE

HEBREW POETRY;

FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN

OF

THE MOST REV. ROBERT LOWTH,

BISHOP OF LONDON.

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THE
INAUGURATION SPEECH
OF THE
END AND THE UTILITY
OF
POETRY.

GENTLEMEN,

I CHEARFULLY embrace the occasion which offers now, though it comes something sooner than I could wish; that I might testify to you, in the undertaking of this work, or rather of this honour which you have conferred on me, I have at least bestowed both study and labour and the greatest alacrity. I can patiently allow myself to be thought deficient in quickness of conception, and in the powers of oratory: but by no means would I be thought not diligent in discharging the duty of an office, which has been decreed to me by your authority; or not sufficiently thankful for a favour, which of whatever kind it is, the coming from you renders it considerable. For favours of this kind are to be estimated I think, by considering not only the favour itself, but the persons who confer it, as well as upon whom it is conferred. When, therefore, I reflect, that I am to fill a post, in which men of the first parts and learning have already

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shone,

shone ; when I behold you, from whom any marks of favour adds to the dignity of the greatest men ; then I think with myself, how I ever could have hoped to obtain such a public mark of your esteem : a testimony which I look upon to be so honourable for me, that I think no labour or assiduity can ever enough repay. This part of my duty, therefore, though slenderly qualified, I most readily begin, and will hereafter endeavour to go on with : for nothing can be more pleasing to a mind truly grateful, than to return thanks, or to have the appearance of being thankful ; and from the remembrance of your kindness, I consider this not as a task, but as a spur to me. I am now not only solicitous and anxious how to acquit myself, but particularly impressed with the reflection, that I have undertaken an appointment which you have always honoured with your attendance and meditations ; that I am to expound a matter, which you have not only judged worthy to be delivered before you and in this seat of learning, but have already heard illustrated in a manner that is suitable to its dignity : if, therefore, it should now fall into neglect and disrepute, I fear how I shall be able to dissemble, its happening through my fault, and not from that of the science or the institution.

But, whatever may be the success of our endeavours, could any thing be more favourable to learning, or to the institution of this seminary of learning, than for this art to have a place here among the rest, whose succour and assistance the others so readily have recourse to ? As there is no science more ancient, so there is none more entertaining ; it is as it were implanted and inherent in man, and carries with it the most pleasing commendation of its own excellence ; and has ever obtained the favour, love, and admiration of the unlearned as well as the learned, the gay as well as the serious. For what can be more becoming in a man of parts and of learning, than to perceive in that art, in which there is so much concealed elegance, what is just, what is not so, what is becoming, what is proper, and wherein consists that which

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we call great and noble, elegant and beautiful; in a word to be able to comprehend and understand those things which to the vulgar are less plain and less intelligible? Nor should we forget, that he, who cultivates and adorns his mind in unfolding the refined elegancies of this art, will from thence perceive a quickness and acuteness in illustrating the more abstracted sciences. And this is what I think that most accomplished man had more particularly in view, to whose munificence we are indebted, that Poetry is now admitted here into the circle of the sciences. For after having furnished his mind not only with the knowledge of every thing that was most useful and that was most serious in learning, but had also adorned it with the most elegant arts, and with every branch of more polished literature; and been educated in that seminary in which the gravest and most sacred studies have always flourished, and do at this time flourish, joined to the more elegant sciences: he no doubt saw and experienced, what use and efficacy the elegant arts are of, in assisting and illustrating the more abstracted parts of learning; how intimate the connection was between Philosophy and Poetry.

The intention of him who instituted this foundation, and the usual custom of a speech of this kind reminds, me, that I should explain to you in a few words, though sufficiently known to you, what I think may truly be said to be the end and aim of Poetry.

The end of Poetry then, is either simply to instruct, or only to amuse; or it is to do both. I could wish that utility alone was considered as its ultimate end; and amusement the means and way to attain that end: so that it might be said to instruct in amusing. For this seems to be the distinction between the Philosopher and the Poet, that although the design of both is the same, yet the method they pursue is different. The aim of each is to instruct, which the one is considered to have performed well if he is perspicuous, acute, and accurate; and

the other, if he is entertaining, smooth, elegant and harmonious. The one appeals from the passions to our reason only ; the other also appeals to our reason, but likewise endeavours to work upon the passions. This takes the nearest and readiest road to virtue and truth ; that likewise tends to the same point, but in a less direct and more variegated path. In a word, the one points them out and makes them so plain, that we must necessarily perceive them ; and the other so sets off and adorns them, as to make us gladly love and embrace them.

2 I therefore look upon Poetry to be principally useful from its being amusing : and Philosophers, I hope, will forgive me, if I shall add, that the writings of a Poet are sometimes more useful than those of a Philosopher, because they are more entertaining. For, to give only a few well-known examples of this matter ; who is there, that does not think that when the more learned of the Romans gave themselves up so much to the study of the Epicurean Philosophy, they were not much more delighted with, had continually in their hands, and carried every where with them, that most beautiful poem of Lucretius, in preference to the writings of Catus, or Amasianus, or even the Commentaries of Epicurus ? Who would suppose that even men of a more uncultivated genius should peruse that elegant and finished work of Virgil, on the Subject of Husbandry, with the same diligence and application as they did the writings of the learned Varro, or (not to mention the elder Cato) even of Columella, by no means an inelegant author ? The authority of Virgil ranks with that of the greatest writers, but in an astonishing harmony of language he far excels every one. On the contrary, if Manilius, who is said to be one of the writers of the Augustan age, and with truth, if we may credit what he himself says ; if he hath drawn up that beautiful work on the knowledge of the stars, in verses so harsh and barren, that Julius Firmicus, a writer of the ensuing age, hath afforded no less pleasure to his readers in explaining the same thing even in prose, though I will allow Manilius every praise as a Philosopher and an Astronomer,

Astronomer, yet I must altogether contend that he is no Poet. For what, I desire to know, is a Poet void of harmony, of smoothness, of elegance, of grace, and of sweetness? Or what utility and instruction can be drawn from a writer whom no one can bear scarce even to read? This, therefore, seems to be plainly the reason why Poetry should render her stile more adorned,

" Et quasi Musæo dulci contingere melle ;"

that by such allurements she might conciliate an esteem for her doctrine; and do like the physicians, who infuse in their bitter potions such drugs that will make them more palatable,

" Ut puerorum ætas improvida ludificetur

" Labrorum tenus, interea perpotet amarum

" Absinthii laticem, deceptaque non capiatur ;"

which Lucretius elegantly illustrates as the design not only of his Poem, but of Poetry in general.

And if it appears in those writers, who openly declare their end is to teach and to instruct, that the more they amuse, so much the better and more efficaciously do they instruct; the same thing will appear still more manifestly, in those, who dissemble their design of instructing, and hold out only the enticement of amusing: who when they treat on the gravest subjects, and set forth all the business of life, and its different offices and duties, can yet throw aside their magisterial harshness, and introduce all the ornaments and allurements of elegance and harmony; can set before our eyes as in a picture, the actions, manners, pursuits, and affections of men; can insinuate themselves by their descriptions, their fables, the sweetness of their numbers, the beauty and variety of their images; and thus instil into the mind of the reader the principles of virtue unawares, or even when predetermined

to the contrary. For what else is it that Epic Poetry doth? Or of what other use is the reading of Homer? Who is so dull, so void of humanity, as not to perceive an incredible pleasure, not to be moved, and roused, and carried away by his divine genius? Who is so inanimate, as not to see, and observe, and feel those beautiful documents of life and manners inscribed, and as it were stamped for ever on his mind? You may from Philosophy seek out the cold precepts of virtue; you may in History see examples without life or animation: but in Poetry we hear the living voice of virtue, we behold her animated form. She not only recommends precepts to us, but makes us in love with those precepts; she not only gives us examples, but imprints them on our minds; first softening the wax by her internal heat, and then giving it the impression which it should afterwards take. Horace hath given that true and just encomium to the Poet;

" Qui quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
 " Plenius ac Melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit:

Plenius more fully, he does not barely explain the divisions and definitions of a thing; but gives such a full and accurate representation of the manners and affections of human nature, and of every thing which relates to mankind both in public and private life, in such numerous and various kind of examples; that he, who comes to her mysteries from the schools of the Philosophers, feels himself carried from a narrow contracted spot, into the midst of a most spacious and flourishing field: Melius better, he does not teach by maxims and precepts, and in dry sentences; but captivates the reader with the harmony of his verse, the beauty of his images, the ingenuity of his fable, the accuracy of his imitation; and so penetrates, delights, astonishes, and forms the mind to virtue, and a love for every thing that is commendable.

But if we go from Epic Poetry to Tragedy, which Aristotle gives the first rank to, on account of her exact and more efficacious imitation,

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we shall still more easily shew, that Poetry excels Philosophy in utility, from her being more amusing and entertaining. For what else is Tragedy, but Philosophy put into a scene; retaining what is her own, yet remitting nothing of her gravity, and assisted with other ornaments? What part of moral discipline hath the writers of Greek Tragedy left untouched or unornamented? What social, or what public duty, what means of allaying the passions, what commendation in praise of virtue, which they have not variously, copiously, and learnedly treated of? There is Eschylus, not a Poet only, but a Pythagorean? Were not Sophocles and Euripides both strenuous in the praise of wisdom; the one a disciple of Anaxagoras and Socrates, the other known by the name of the Stage Philosopher? So that in these persons their poetic faculty has been of no small accession to Philosophy: nor has any one yet carried that art to its highest pitch and summit, who had not first laid the foundations of it in the inmost recesses of Philosophy.

But if any one should say, that some have excelled in this kind of Poetry, who were never looked upon as Philosophers, or men of more than ordinary learning; I would wish him to remember, that what I look for, is the thing itself, not according to the vulgar opinion, nor meaning to cavil about the signification of a word: but such a one, who by the strength of his genius can search into the nature and springs of human actions, who can discover the causes by which the ardour of the mind is either raised or depressed, and not only explain her different motions in language, but set them plainly and visibly before our eyes; who can excite, govern, put in motion, and moderate them; him, though less assisted by the help of learning, I hold to be a Philosopher, and most eminently so. And such I look upon Shakespear to be, who in one single play has shewn the passion of jealousy, its causes, manners, progress, and effects; more fully, more ingeniously, more accurately, and more exactly than was ever done, I think, in a like argument, by any one of all the different sects of Philosophers.

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But if Tragedy is of the very essence of Philosophy, and to all the force and gravity of wisdom, adds her own ornaments, and charms peculiar to herself, as sweetness of verse, the assistance of fable, the power of imitation, and the truth of action; shall we say, that Philosophy must yield the palm to Poetry in utility; or rather is she not bound by the closest ties to her, from whose assistance and commendation she derives such advantage in obtaining the utility she aims at.

But if the power of imitation and fable is so great, the authority of truth itself may seem to be greater; and History at last, rather than Poetry be considered as our mistress and guide. Which is quite otherwise: for History is contained within too narrow bounds, and under too severe laws. She gives an account of things that have been done, and treads in the footsteps of events; she relates what hath happened, not what might or ought to have happened; nor goes not where opportunity of instruction and probability calls, but where matter of fact compels her. History relates past events of persons and things; Poetry treats of things in general: the one searches out the causes of things from uncertain conjectures; the other clearly and evidently demonstrates them: the one catches by chance at a splendid image of virtue; the other contemplates her plain simple form: this goes in a regular prescribed track; that takes the free space of nature: this, in a word, is subservient to her argument, the other regulates it. Wherefore Aristotle affirms, that Poetry is more noble, and more intimately connected with Philosophy than History: nor did Bacon who is not inferior to him think otherwise. The thing itself, and the great authority of the man, requires that I should give you his own words concerning it.

“ As the sensible world (says he) is inferior in dignity to the rational
 “ soul, Poetry seems to give those things to human nature, which
 “ History denies, and to content the mind with the shadow of things
 “ as it were, when what is more solid was not to be obtained. For if
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“ any one takes a more circumspect view of the matter, Poetry gives
 “ a convincing proof, that a more illustrious magnitude of things, a
 “ more perfect order, and a more beautiful variety, is pleasing to the
 “ human mind, than can be found any where in nature since the fall.
 “ Therefore, since those transactions and events, which a faithful Histori-
 “ rian must relate, are not of that amplitude to satisfy the human
 “ mind; Poetry steps in, and makes the facts still more heroic. As
 “ true History relates the success of things to be not according to the
 “ merits of their virtues and vices; Poetry corrects her, and gives the
 “ issue and events as they merit, and agreeable to the law of Nemesis.
 “ As true History disgusts the mind from a too great satiety and resem-
 “ blance of things; Poetry enlivens her, singing of things which are
 “ unexpected, full of variety, and vicissitudes. So that Poetry con-
 “ duces not only to our amusement, but to elevate the mind, and
 “ form the manners. She may therefore very deservedly be thought to
 “ partake of something divine, as she raises and delights the soul,
 “ suiting her images to the desires of the mind; and not submitting the
 “ mind (as Reason and History doth) to bare matters of fact.

Nor is this elevation of the soul, and as it were a participation of the
 Divinity, or the undoubted utility which it hath in forming the man-
 ners, so entirely confined to Epic Poetry, (of which alone this great man
 here treats of) that all other kinds of Poetry should be considered as
 destitute of these virtues: there are others, which would willingly
 participate of these encomiums. First the Ode,

“ Ingentes animos angusto in pectore versans;”

which though inferior in other respects, yet in force, vehemence, im-
 petuosity, in gravity, and sometimes even in severity undoubtedly
 gives place to none. Their manner of acting is different; the effect
 is perhaps the same. Epic Poetry pursues her end slowly, cautiously,

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considerately, and therefore possibly with more certainty ; she insinuates herself by degrees, penetrates, moves, and delights us, first rushing on, then retiring back ; and thus amusing the reader with her pleasing variety of things, she applies a kind of gentle violence to his mind ; and works upon him both by her pressure, and seeming negligence : the Ode, on the contrary strikes, and rouses the passions to their summit in an instant. The one is like a flame, which being assisted on every side by the wind, creeps along by little and little, and at last destroys every thing with a great conflagration : the other is like lightning, which suddenly darts out,

“ *Magnamque cadens, magnamque revertens*
 “ *Dat stragem late, sparsosque recolligit ignes.*”

And what force this kind of Poetry is of, in regulating our lives, and in forming our manners ; but especially how much it avails, in exciting and nourishing that generous elevation of the mind and faculties, by which virtue is more particularly upheld, we shall be sensible of, if we recal to our remembrance the Monuments of the Greeks. Let us take a view of Pindar's verses, which, though not the first of their kind, at yet, I know not how, almost the only ones that we have scarce any remains of : what an enthusiasm must they not have inspired in those Greeks who sung them, and heard them every where sung ; for these verses were not only admired by the learned and more refined, but were continually in the mouths of the meanest of the people. When they heard their Gods, their Heroes, their Ancestors who were reckoned among their gods, their Provinces, their Cities, and the first inhabitants of them, when they heard all these celebrated with such honours and such glory ; would not their breasts glow with a desire of praise, with an emulation of such excellent men, with a love for their country
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perhaps too frantic, but neither discommendable nor useless ; and so it did, and must necessarily follow, that, being elated with such loftiness of mind shall I term it, or puffed up with pride and insolence, they looked on all other nations in comparison with themselves, as barbarians, of no account, and most sovereignly despised them ? At the sacred games, which did not a little keep up the warlike virtue of the Greeks, the verses of the Poets added no small accession of dignity and renown : nor was the Olympic crown a more ample reward to those who contended for victory, than an encomium from Pindar, or Stesichorus. Oh ! that antiquity had not envied us the possession of Stesichorus, whose gravity and magnificence every one is full of ; whom Dionysius extols above all others, in first selecting subjects that were splendid and majestic, and then most admirably preserving and keeping up to the dignity of his characters. He also particularly gives the same encomium to Alcæus : but what a man ? what a brave citizen ? how animated in the defence of his country and her laws ? what a bitter scourge and persecutor of tyrants ? who consecrated his sword as well as his lyre to his country and her liberty ; whose inspiring Odes, which were continually repeated by the people, were a perpetual safeguard against the attempts of wicked citizens, not only for his own city, but for all Greece. Indeed, such vehement, and such animated kind of Poetry, composed by so celebrated a man, must no doubt have great weight, in rousing the minds of the citizens to a sense of virtue, and in deterring them from doing wrong ; but more particularly in nourishing and keeping up that vigour of the mind, that noble magnanimity, which is the guardian and protector of liberty. Was it to be feared that any one would dare to establish the tyranny of Pisistratus, where in every assembly, and even in the streets by the meanest of the people that Ode of Callistratus was continually sung, I know not of which, but certainly of a most ingenious Poet, and a very good citizen.

* Εν μυρτε κλαδι το ξιφος φορησω,
 Ωσπερ Αρμοδιος κ' Αριστογειτων,
 Οτε τον τυραννον κτανετην,
 Ισονομης τ' Αθηνας εποησατην.

Φλταθ' Αρμοδι', οτι πα τεθνηκας,
 Νησοις δ' εν μακικρων σε φασιν ειναι,
 Ινα περ ποδωκης Αχιλλευσ,
 Τυδειδην τε φασιν Διομηδεα.

Εν μυρτε κλαδι το ξιφος φωρησω,
 Ωσπερ Αρμοδιος κ' Αριστογειτων,
 Οτ' Αθηναίης εν θυσιας
 Ανδρα τυραννον Ιππαρχον εκαινετην.

Αει σφων κλεος εσσεται κατ' αιων,
 Ωιλταθ' Αρμοδιε κ' Αριστογειτον,
 Οτι τον τυραννον κτανετον,
 Ισονομης τ' Αθηνας εποησατον.

And if any of the murtherers of the tyrant, after the Ides of March, had dispersed such verses as these among the people, and in the forum;

* In a branch of myrtle I will bear the poignard, as did Harmodius and Aristogiton,

When they slew the tyrant, and set the Athenians free.

Most beloved Harmodius, you are not dead, but are now, they say, in the islands of the blessed ;

Where are also the great Achilles, and the valiant Diomedes.

In a branch of myrtle I will bear the poignard, as did Harmodius and Aristogiton,

When at the festivals of Minerva they slew that tyrant Hipparchus.

Your glory shall endure for ever and ever, most beloved Harmodius and Aristogiton, For you have slain the tyrant, and set the Athenians free.

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it would undoubtedly have put an end to the empire of the Cæsars : of more weight would have been one single strain of Harmodius, than all the Philippics of Cicero.

There are also other species of Poetry, which though used by us on trivial and less important occasions, yet sometimes put on a graver and more majestic character. Such as Elegy ; I do not mean of the light and amorous kind, but the ancient, wise, grave, and serious kind of elegy; the guide of life, the mistress of manners, that presides over cities, and is the guardian of virtue. Not to name many of those writers, of whom we have still a few remains to judge by ; there is Solon, a most holy man, a most wise statesman, the best of Poets : who, if any thing arduous was to be carried into execution concerning the government of the state, ever had recourse to the assistance of Poetry. If the laws were to be put in force, the turbulence of the citizens to be chastised, or their minds to be excited and animated with a desire for liberty ? Some sharp, severe, inspiring verses were instantly distributed among the people, which, though grave and censorious, were not without elegance :

Εκ νεφέλης πέλεται χιονος μενος ἡδὲ χαλαζης,
Βροντὴ δ' ἐκ λαμπροῦς γιγνέται ἀσέροπης·
Ἀνδρῶν δ' ἐκ μεγάλων πόλις ὀλλυταί· εἰς δὲ μοναρχίᾳ
Δῆμος αἰδρεῖται δουλοσύνην ἐπεσε.

It is well known that the Athenians were indebted for the re-taking of Salamis from their enemies, entirely to the verses of Solon, which was done not only against their will, but contrary to their express commands.

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- From the clouds come the storms of hail and of snow,
The thunders are produced by the vivid lightning,
So through great men may a city be ruined ;
And the people by imprudence be enslaved to a monarch.

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For after frequent slaughters, having so much despaired of all hopes of ever regaining it, that it was death for any one even to propose to renew the war, yet that verse of *Ιομεν εις Σαλαμιναι*. *Let us away to Salamis*, had such an effect, as if pronounced by one who had prophesied in a kind of fury, that the people, as it were by inspiration, ran to their arms, cried out for war, and to be led to the attack, where rushing on their enemies, they totally defeated them, and regained that most wished-for victory.

We have also some remains of that Tyrtæus, who

“ *Mares animos in martia bella*
“ *Verfibus exacuit;*”

all of them in the praise of martial valour, of a love for our country, and the immortal glory of those who fall bravely fighting in the field of battle; verses which would inspire boldness and courage to the most timid: and with which he animated and led on the Lacedemonians, who were broke down and disheartened, to a confident assurance of victory. The fact is well known, and authenticated by the testimony of many writers: which was it not so, by some perhaps these things might be thought to be fabulous; to me indeed, they do not seem less worthy of the credit of history, than they appear to be reasonable. For must we not suppose that those men would fight with the utmost ardour, and with the firmness and obstinacy of virtue, who when they were standing in their ranks, on their march, or going to attack their enemies, were continually singing to the sound of the flute such verses as these?

* Θυμῷ γῆς περὶ τῆς δὲ μάχουμένης, καὶ περὶ παίδων
 Θνησκώμεν, ψυχῶν μηκέτι φειδομένοι
 Ὀνέοι· ἀλλὰ μάχεσθ' ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι μένοντες,
 Μῆδ' ἐφυγῆς αἰχρᾶς ἀρχετέ, μῆδ' ἐφοβῶ.

Ἀλλὰ τίς ἐν διαβάς μέντω ποτὶν ἀμφοτέροισι
 Στήριχθεις ἐπὶ γῆς, χεῖλος ὀδῶσι δακνῶν.
 Δεξιτέρῃ δ' ἐν χεὶρι τινοσσέτω δορὶμον ἐγχος,
 Κινεῖτω δὲ λόφον δεινὸν ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς·

Καὶ ποδᾶ παρ' ποδὶ θύεις, καὶ ἐπ' ἀσπίδος ἀσπίδ' ἐρείσας,
 Ἐν δὲ λόφον τε λόφῳ, καὶ κυνέην κυνέῃ,
 Καὶ σφόνον σφῶν πεπαλημένος ἀνδρὶ μάχεσθ' ὄρω,
 Ἡ ξίφος κωπήν, ἢ δορὶ μακρὸν ἔλκων.

Οὐδέποτε κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀπολλύται ἐδ' ὀνομ' αὐτῆς,
 Ἀλλ' ὑπὸ γῆς περὶ ἔων, γίγνεται ἀθάνατος,
 Ὄντιν' ἀριστεύοντα, μένοντάς τε, μακροναμένοντες
 Γῆς περὶ καὶ παίδων, θάρρος Ἀρῆς ὀλεσθ'.

That we may not entirely pass over the lesser species of Poetry, we shall certainly be thought by many to have given them all the merit, and

* Let us fight with animation for our country, and let us die for our children, regardless of our lives :

Fight, my brave youths, standing close one to the other, neither thinking of flight nor of fear ;

But let every one boldly advancing, stand with his feet firm to the ground, biting his lips with his teeth ;

In his right-hand let him brandish his spear ; and shake the formidable plumes of his helmet ;

And joining foot to foot, and approaching shield to shield, and crest to crest, and helmet to helmet,

Let him fight, with his sword or his spear, man to man ; opposing his breast to that of his enemy :

The great renown of that man shall never cease, nor shall his name ; but though under ground, he will be immortal ;

Whom the implacable Mars shall have slain, whilst bravely standing and fighting for his country and children.

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perhaps more than they deserve, in deeming their utility to consist, in the pleasure which they afford. But you probably, Gentlemen, will not think they should be entirely neglected, if you reflect, that these levities and amusements help to relax the mind when fatigued in the laborious search after truth; that they unbrace the spirits when too vehemently agitated, restore them when exhausted, invigorate them when weakened, and recreate them by a change and variety in the studies: and for which we have the example and authority of the greatest men; among the Greeks of Solon, Plato, and Aristotle; and among the Romans, of Scipio and Lælius, of Julius and Augustus Cæsar, M. Varro and M. Brutus; who frequently and gladly interspersed this delightful and elegant relaxation with their most weighty affairs, and deepest studies. Indeed, nature seems to have consulted most admirably for us; when she impels us so strongly to the search after truth, which lies so remote, and is not to be obtained without great labour, in having found and prepared such a relaxation for the mind to have recourse to when oppressed, where she might throw off her languor and despondency.

Nor must we omit, that as these studies afford a relief from your labours, so also from them may many of the ornaments of literature be taken. First to conceive clearly in the mind, and fully to comprehend things themselves, and the causes of them; and then to explain them not only plainly, but elegantly. For in this we are all rather delicate, that we are not content with a bare and naked explanation even of the gravest subjects, but stand in need of the assistance of art to overcome our disgust; the language must be rather flowery, the sentences splendid, and the ear must be caught by the harmony of the periods. All which things though Poets aim at far more than other writers; yet those who have bestowed any time and labour in reading and imitating their writings, will, I think, perceive this benefit, that

that their understanding will be cultivated and formed, the strength and activity of their mind increased, and their language, by such a habit and intercourse, will acquire a certain form and similitude: as we see in those who have made any proficiency in dancing; that though they do not compose their steps and gestures to any set measure, yet, from this exercise, even when not practising it, they acquire an habitual elegance in all their motions.

Neither is it incredible, that both Cæsar and Cicero should be indebted to the charms of Poetry, for the fame of their oratorical eloquence; the one the most elegant, the other the most eloquent of the Romans; and both of them given to the reading of Poetry, and exercised in the writing of it. This appears so manifestly in the writings of Plato, that he seems not only to have judged badly and perversely; but to have drawn upon himself the charge of being ungrateful, in rejecting Poetry from his imaginary city, to which he owed the splendour and culture of his understanding; and from whose fountains he had drawn that sweet copiousness of expression, together with such a stream of eloquence.

But to return to her more majestic parts: in this, certainly Poetry most eminently excels all other sciences, that she favours of something lofty and almost divine, that she not only recreates the mind when wearied, calms her when agitated, raises her when oppressed; but makes her soar upwards, and attempt things which are noble, sublime, and arduous: she not only lays down the best precepts for us, and renders them most engaging; but implants and fixes them on our mind. And as there is a desire of praise and fame innate in us, which stimulates us so vehemently to those things, that are great and splendid; Poetry diligently endeavours to fulfil this wish of nature, and to

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cherish and increase in us those sparks of virtue. As she has ever considered it as her peculiar office to celebrate those things which have been bravely and nobly done, that she might hand down to posterity the eminent actions of the greatest men, and make their fame immortal from their own monuments; these thanks are certainly due to her, that she not only forms the mind to virtue by her precepts, directs her by the examples she gives, and animates and inflames her by a force peculiar to herself; but also pays to virtue a most ample and delightful reward for her labours.

But we shall yet think of Poetry more lightly and more humbly than her dignity requires, unless we view her where she shines in all her magnitude, unless we contemplate her employed in sacred rites, and administering to religion. This is her first and chief duty; and this she so happily accomplishes, that in other things she seems to be acting a kind of borrowed personage, and here only to appear in her proper character; elsewhere to be obliged to have recourse to the assistance of art, and here alone to depend on her own force; or rather to be sustained by divine inspiration. For what is there throughout the whole of Poetry, or what can the human mind conceive more grand, more sublime, more energetic; what can be more beautiful and more elegant, than those passages which occur in the sacred writings of the Hebrew Prophets? who equal an almost unspeakable magnitude of things with a suitable dignity of language and majesty of expression; and as there are some of them, which are more ancient than even the fables of the Greek Poets, so they all excel them in sublimity, as much as the most ancient exceed them in antiquity. And if we look for the first origin of Poetry, it seems to be referred to religion entirely. For as it is a faculty that proceeds from nature, and but of late date reduced to certain laws and precepts, which belong not to any one age or nation in particular, but to mankind in general; we must necessarily attribute it to the more vehement

ment affections of the human mind: the nature of which is to vent themselves in lofty and ardent expressions, quite out of the common course of language, and which break out on a sudden, and separate by intervals, the uniform tenor of a continued speech; they deal out as it were by repeated blows, sharp, bold, piercing sentences; and frame, and in a manner modulate their language according to the habit and emotions of the soul. This is more particularly observed in the affections of joy and admiration; and what is there that could so forcibly strike the mind of a man newly created, and which was not yet depraved by the vanity of opinions, as those things which must be so plainly obvious to him, the goodness, wisdom, and magnitude of the most high God? What is more probable, than that the first essay of his rude and incoherent verse, should burst out, from the ardour of an enthusiastic mind, in the praises of his Creator? This, there is not the least doubt of, that Poetry was nourished in those sacred rites from whence she seems to have had her origin: to go round the temples, to stand before the altars, was her first and more peculiar occupation: and though so many different religions have existed in various nations and ages, yet in this we find all of them to agree, that they should be celebrated with hymns and songs. That this is the origin of Poetry, she gives no very obscure marks, in having ever embraced with the most ardent affection, every thing that is sacred and celestial, as her parent and protector; hither, as to her own country she loves to retire, and here she most willingly occupies herself, and flourishes best. It will be sufficient for the present, only to have touched upon these things, and to have taken as it were a slight view of them; hereafter perhaps we may be able more fully to discuss them.

But how, or in what manner, I hope you will readily forgive me, Gentlemen, if I dare not yet venture to lay before you; it would be acting like one who shewed but little reverence for your judgment, and
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presumed much upon his own, to suffer any thing to escape from him before you, which he had not previously well digested in his mind. I have therefore determined with myself, that I will offer nothing hastily to you, nothing but what has been laboured at by me with the utmost industry; and that I will carefully endeavour to compensate as much as is possible for genius, learning, copiousness, and every thing which I feel to be wanting in me, by care, diligence, and labour; which, if I perform, the rest, Gentlemen, I hope you will readily overlook, and forgive in me: and that you will still continue to protect him with your kindness and indulgence, whom you have already honoured with your favour and countenance.

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